There were both "wild" and "village" Veddas even in the days of his youth, and the only difficulty experienced with the old man was in keeping the two classes perfectly distinct in his mind. The following facts were obtained in the course of three interviews, each lasting somewhat less than an hour. He stated that he was just able to walk when he came to the Eastern Province, and that as he grew up he spent much of his time with the Veddas hunting and collecting honey. The Veddas of those days were a merry people, and with a most eloquent gesture the old man showed how they would throw dry leaves into the air and shout and dance for happiness; he said also that they were absolutely truthful. Every Vedda carried a bow and arrows and an axe; more arrows than one were carried, but it was not clear that they only carried two; it seemed that *tudaki*, a word that the old man said was used to describe the number of arrows carried, may have meant a small quantity or may have been a hunting term corresponding to "brace" or "leash." The old man had seen Veddas shoot lying on their backs and holding the bow with their feet, but this was only for amusement and to show their skill, no serious shooting was done in this way. The feathers of peacocks, herons and hawks were especially used in feathering arrows; any of these birds would be shot with an ordinary arrow, and peacock was eaten as was jungle fowl, though no one would eat porcupine or buffalo; for these abstinences he could give no reasons. Traps were not used. Fish were eaten, being caught by poisoning the water of pools with the bark of *dambu*, *mahapata*, *panitiate* (? *Ennada zeylanica*) and the fruit of *timbiri* (*Diospyros embryopteris*) and *kahavanna* (*Adenanthera bicolor*). Pots and bark cloth bags were made still betel pouches of monkey skin, though even then some village Veddas had cloth betel bags, and these occasionally reached the wilder Veddas. Among the village Veddas both sexes bored their ears and the women wore ivory studs in them; whether the women of the wilder groups bored their ears and wore these ornaments was not clear, certainly the men did not. Fire was obtained from two pieces of wood by drilling.

The wilder Veddas of those days built no houses but lived

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

sparse undergrowth, so that it was an ideal place for a camp within easy distance of water. They may remain at this place three or four months, or even longer, before they seek a new village site, but probably they never go far from Horabora tank, on account of the great supply of lotus and other seeds which the lake affords.

"None of them is tattooed, and they wear very few ornaments. Both sexes, however, perforate the lobe of the ear, and through the opening pass a wire, strung with beads or seeds. The women sometimes enlarge this perforation, and wear in it a plug, made by rolling a strip of palm leaf into a cylinder, from one half to an inch in diameter.

"We got from them one of their earthen bowls that had rough patterns drawn upon it, but saw no other evidence of artistic ability. They make coarse mats and baskets of reeds and strips of bamboo, and use gourds and coconut shells for water bottles and cups. Spoons and ladles they make from a piece of coconut shell, with two holes, on one side, and a stick thrust through them to form a handle[1]."

Village Veddas of Tamankaduwa.

There are a number of communities of village Veddas in Tamankaduwa, all of which show marked evidence of intermarriage with the Sinhalese and Tamils.

Hinhettaliya. There is a large Vedda chena here, but most of its inhabitants were away at the time of our visit, those present appeared distinctly half-bred. Their mode of life is similar to that prevalent at Dambani and Bulugahaladena, i.e. they are occupied in chena cultivation, cattle rearing, and do a little hunting, but as they have not specially preserved it for show purposes they have forgotten the Vedda dialect. However, they remember their marriage and practise exogamy; they also reverence the Hat Yaka.

Kalukalaeba. Another settlement was seen at Kalukalaeba, here were about twelve mud huts, all empty on our arrival, as it was the harvesting season and the people had gone to live

[1] "Notes of a trip to the Veddas of Ceylon." *Bulletin of the Free Museum of Science and Art of the University of Pennsylvania*, Vol. III, 1900.

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1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Go and drop behind the body of the monitor lizard;
Pierce it, dear cousin.
Leave that place, arrow-brother,
Go and cleave it in the angle (or edge) of the back.
Leave that place, arrow-brother,
Go and doubly (?) cleave it in the tail.
Leave that place, arrow-brother,
Go and cleave it in the angle of the tail.
Leave that place, arrow-brother,
Go and doubly (?) cleave it in the neck.
Leave that place, arrow-brother,
Go and doubly (?) cleave it in the stomach.
Leave that place, arrow-brother,
Go and fit (yourself) in the middle of the armpit.

"In order to rhyme all the lines ought to end in a long a.

"*Ettama* is an evident mistake for *etanama*.

"*Tomma* is for *tumba*, a Vaedi word for tail, the Sinhalese is *tuba*.

"*Accu* and *accara* are for *assu*, abl. of *assa*, angle or corner.

"*Loetten* is a word I have not previously met with. The only probable derivation with which I am acquainted is the Tamil *iratta*, Sin. *retta*, double, two-fold.

"*Mauld* means younger brother.

"*Kiri hurá*, lit. milk cousin, simply means dear cousin."

Love Charms.

822 Love magic or charms to compel love do not seem to exist among the wilder Veddas, though in the Bintenne we were told that women may charm the waist strings they give to their husbands, in order to ensure their fidelity.

Amulets.

301 Before discussing the existence of these it is necessary to determine to what extent the Veddas now wear, or formerly wore, ornaments.

Disregarding the stories current among the Sinhalese that the Veddas formerly had valuable jewellery and pots of pure gold—legends of which the Veddas themselves are quite

[Cerata — see p. xx. — Analyst]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
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ignorant—the evidence for the use of jewellery or personal ornaments worn for their own sake is limited to the former wearing of ear ornaments by the Vedda women. Bailey states that the women "have their ears pierced and wear in the lobes round studs of ivory[1]," and this was confirmed by our old Sinhalese informant, whose evidence as to the former condition of the Veddas has been given in Chapter II. It seems that men did not wear ear ornaments, although we met some village Veddas (Dambani) who wore earrings, and a few men in other communities were seen with pierced ears. This point of view is confirmed by Nevill who wrote, "Men occasionally wore a few large beads on their waist string, if they could afford it, but no other jewels," and he describes the women's ear ornaments as "ear-jewels, the size of a man's thumb made of ivory, white horn, or bone, and carved or etched...worn through the lobe of the ear[2]."

At the present time among the wilder Veddas neither men nor women wear beads or ornaments of any kind, though the women are pleased to accept beads as presents.

It is otherwise among the more sophisticated Veddas of the Bintenne. At Omuni all the women and girls wore beads, and though they could not account for their origin, we were able to ascertain that they had been in their possession at least five generations. They descended usually from grandmother to granddaughter, some strings being given to each girl-child at birth, the rest being usually given when the girl married, or on the death of the grandmother. These beads are of glass, mostly red though some are green and a few white. They have been identified by Mr C. H. Read as 17th century Venetian beads, and were doubtless a present from some notable who required assistance from the Veddas as he passed through their country.

This summarises all we have been able to learn concerning the use of personal ornaments among the Veddas, and though Nevill states, presumably of the Veddas of the Bintenne, that they "delight to deck their hair with bright or fragrant flowers," we were unable to find any trace of this practice occurring

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 284. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 190.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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among the wilder Veddas at the present day. It therefore appears that although beads are worn as ornaments by the members of certain communities in the Bintenne there is no evidence for their use as such among the Veddas to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road.

We may next consider certain facts which seem to indicate that beads may be sometimes treated as amulets, or at least as having magical power. At Bandaraduwa where there has been a great deal of Sinhalese influence, one woman wore a piece of knotted string round her throat which had been charmed and put on by a Sinhalese to cure her of some ailment. When we gave her a string of beads she was very pleased and immediately broke the old charmed string and put the beads round her neck in place of it.

At Bendiyagalge all the women were particularly anxious for us to give beads to their children and immediately put these round their necks, but those given to themselves were not usually put on in our presence. In both these cases there is only the suggestion that beads were regarded as anything more than ornaments, and this also holds good as regards the beads of bear's bone worn by Kaira of Bingoda already recorded, but in the following cases the relation of beads to the *yaku* is perfectly clear. The women of Unuwatura Bubula, though they possessed beads of the same kind as those worn by the women of Omuni, were afraid to wear them, and gave them to the shaman to keep and use in *yaku* ceremonies. In this village we found that women would not accept red beads as presents because "they were afraid," though they readily took the white beads offered them, and the shaman when dancing to the Alut Yakini wore cross shoulder straps of old beads, and similar beads were kept for Indigollae Yaka.

There is equally strong evidence of the definite association of beads with the *yaku* in other communities, though the reason for this association could not be determined. At Sitala Waniya a band of bast was placed upon the offering to the Rahu Yaku, and our informants said that they would have used beads instead of the bast had they possessed them. At the same place when preparing for the dance to Dola Yaka, who give

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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success in honey gathering, the shaman asked us for two strings of beads. These beads he placed over betel leaves upon two arrows thrust in the centre of the dancing ground which were surrounded by betel leaves offered to the *yaka*. These beads were said to represent the rough rope of creeper with which the green twigs forming the smoker were secured and the rope by which the smoker was lowered to the comb.

When it is remembered that Veddas do not tattoo or paint themselves, and have never been seen wearing any kind of seeds as ornaments, it seems reasonable to assume that where beads are sought after by the Veddas they are valued for their supposed magical properties.

In conclusion we may give the only perfectly clear instance of a Vedda wearing an amulet with which we are acquainted. The shaman of Bandaraduwa wore on his wrist a small silver cylinder such as is commonly used to contain a written charm. The cylinder was empty and had never contained a charm, but the shaman told us that he wore it in order to be cured of an illness from which he had suffered formerly, and that presently he would give the cylinder to some pilgrim proceeding to Katagaṃ in order that he might deposit it in the temple there.

The Eating of Human Liver.

Every group of Veddas except the most sophisticated village Veddas believe that it was formerly the custom for a man to carry in his betel pouch a small piece of dry human liver. But the majority of our informants were not clear as to the exact reason for doing this, though they were all agreed that it had something to do with raising a man's valour and making him strong to bear trouble. It was essential that the liver should be taken from a man killed by the individual who proposed to carry a portion of the dried liver in his pouch. When a man had been killed the slayer would open his belly and take out a small portion of his liver which he would dry in the sun in a secret place. This custom appears to have ceased about three generations ago, but the following instance, said to have occurred about fifty years ago, was given us at Bandaraduwa.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

157 ness; in others, that perplexed manner common in people of weak intellect. The women appear sharper and quicker than the men, unless it be that they have less *mauvais honte*, and acquit themselves better before company, but they are the most ordinary specimens of the sex I ever saw.*

142 The Veddahs bear a very striking resemblance to each other—both in feature and expression. And this is especially remarkable among those of Nilgala, who have preserved their ancient customs more completely than their brethren of Bintenne, who live in a less secluded country, have been able to do.

291 Their clothing—so to speak—is the most scanty conceivable. A scrap of dirty cloth, scarcely larger than the paper on which I write, supported in front by a string round the waist, being a complete Veddah suit for male or female; for the rag that does duty for crinoline, is scarcely less diminutive than that which represents the male garments†. Indeed, almost the only difference [304] in the costume of the men and women is, that the latter have [301] their ears pierced, and wear in the lobes round studs of ivory.

515 Neither sex is remarkable for personal cleanliness, and with their rugged unkempt locks half obscuring their features, the Veddahs certainly realize all one's preconceived notions of the most barbarous savages.

302 Knox's picture of "a Vadda, or Wild Man" is a fancy portrait, 114 and decidedly flattering. They do not "tye their hair on their crowns in a bunch", nor do they indulge in nearly so much drapery or beard as is worn by that stout well-to-do-looking [276] gentleman, who is placidly smoking an imaginary pipe, for smoking is a luxury at which the Veddahs have not yet arrived. The contrast between Knox's idea of the wild men, and their actual appearance, is amusing.

181 When brought in from their forests to be "looked at," they huddle themselves together like a herd of wild and timid animals driven into a corner from which there is no escape. Attract their attention by a present of rice or cloth, and in an instant they become like eager children, scrambling for a new toy,—forget the presence of strangers, and intent only on what is before them, jostle each other, clamouring for a fair division of the spoil, and complaining loudly against those of their companions whom they suspect of having got more than their share of the good things.

But it is not fair to judge of them when so utterly out of their

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* I saw some of them display the liveliest curiosity at the sight of their "white sisters", two remarkably good specimens of whom found their way to Nilgala in 1857.

[287] † Formerly the sacking-like bark of the "Riti tree" (*antiaris innoxia*, or *A. saccidora*) supplied the place of cloth; and bags made of this fibrous bark are still used by the Singhalese for carrying rice, etc.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

But dogs are still prized by the Veddah. Of all his possessions, he values most his bow, which is placed under his head when he sleeps; and next in his estimation is the dog who guards it, sleeping always at his master's head. "What would you do," I asked a Veddah once, "if your bow were stolen?" "No one could steal it," he replied; "the dog would not let him." "But if any one killed your dog." His answer was significant. He clutched his axe, and made a motion as though he would cut down the man who did so. 231 422 [685]

And this was no idle threat. In 1849, a Bintenne Veddah deliberately knocked a man's brains out, for having, as he believed, killed two of his dogs by magic.* He never attempted to deny what he had done. "It is true," he said at the coroner's inquest, "I killed him, and I did so because he had killed, by witchcraft, the two dogs I had reared and hunted with for my support." He added, as quite a secondary justification, that the murdered man had also practised his magic arts on himself. He detailed, with great minuteness, how he lay wait for him, and how, while he, with his wife and child, was resting in the shade, he watched his opportunity, and felled him with a club: and—strong evidence of the proverbial truthfulness of the Veddahs—he described how, by his influence (he was the head man of one of the small tribes), he intimidated the widow and father of his victim, and so kept the murder secret for some days. 698 685 [754]

None but the woman saw the deed; and had falsehood been the normal characteristic of the Veddahs, as I fear it is with too many of their more civilized compatriots, he would probably have escaped punishment. He was tried and convicted of murder, but the sentence of death was commuted to several years imprisonment. It was hoped that, having received some instructions in goal, he might carry back with him some little civilization to his own people. 648

But imprisonment was to him a greater punishment than death. He pined away in confinement, and was released to save his life. I have often seen him in Bintenne. Civilization has not done much for him. He differs from his brethren only in having acquired a taste for jewelry, for he wears with apparent pride, a tawdry brass chain round his waist. [301]

The Veddahs eat the flesh of elk,† deer, monkeys, pigs, the iguano, and pengolin—all flesh, indeed, but that of oxen, elephants, 262

* The murdered man was not a Veddah, but a low-country vagrant; several of whom have, of late years, taken up their abode near the Bintenne Veddahs, to their great annoyance.

† What is commonly termed an elk in Ceylon, is the Samba deer (*rusa Aristotelis*). [136]

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

of the bark of the Ritti (*Antiaris toxicaria*) for males, and a sort of leaf-skirt for the females. 291 824

No jewellery was worn by the males or females. Sometimes a necklace made of shells ("Bellan") was worn by the younger females, but such things as rings were unknown to the earlier Veddas. 301

They had no idea of time beyond the subdivision of the 24 hours into two divisions, viz., that of light and darkness. Other than this there was no computation except a man's knowledge of a certain striking event that happened in his "small time," but how long ago that was could not be stated. 805

The taking of a woman to wife required mainly the sanction of the girl's father, after which a few exchanges might be made in signification of the consent of parties. After this the man and woman lived together, while before they would not so much as dare speak to one another in public, unless related. 583

The age of the woman was invariably extremely youthful at the time of her "marriage," and even at the present day, notwithstanding the comparative civilization of the modern Vedda descendants, youthful marriages still prevail. 582

I found in response to my inquiries in all parts of the Vedda country that I visited, that 12 years was a common age for a girl to be taken to wife at. In one village I was present at an inquiry by a headman into a case where the girl was only 8. In this case the headman expressed the opinion that the marriage was "very bad."

My informant told me that with the Veddas there was no custom for the woman, when about to give birth to a child, to go to a separate house or hut for the purpose, but that this custom had only come in later. 844 177

Among the Veddas there was no such thing as prostitution, nor could I learn that there was polyandry. 548 595

The bearing age of women would be at about 14, that of puberty being a year earlier. 145

Women would have children up to about 28, and as might be expected from the condition of youthful cohabitation for one or two years prior to puberty, the proportion of males and females in a family would be pretty nearly equal. On 165

δ: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

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"Their homes, the shelter of the trees." (Page 9)

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Naida and his family. (Page 9)

[FACING p. 9]

8; Spittel D-8 (ca. 1938) 1945 AX8 Vedda AX8

on summer days, it flamed through the island making it its permanent home, while in India, the land of its birth, it dwindled away.

We had undertaken this trip with the object of visiting Mandalagalla where we learned the wildest Veddas of the Eastern province lived; but on coming to Omuna we found that that place, only twelve miles away, was quite unknown to the present folk of Omuna, a pathless barrier of dense jungle intervening. We made the best of a bad job; and, abandoning our original project, struck west for Dolagalwella.

At evening we camped by a desolate pool called *Hawan-kapana-mulla* (rush-cutting nook). There is barely a spot in these jungles, however bare, that has not its name, thanks to the nomadic Veddas. Here was a glade in which they hunted, or a pool at which they drank, there a hole in which an axe was found (*Pure-thuto-wulla*).

The only indications of the track we followed were the barely recognisable prunings, fifteen years old, of saplings. The forest was ideal for travel; in the shelter of the great trees the morning air was cool and refreshing. Coming to the Maduru Oya we walked a mile up-stream and climbed the mimosa-covered bank, soon to be lost in a wilderness of trees. A leader monkey yelled a warning to his clan, a surprised sambur belled startlingly close; but after that a silence prevailed unbroken by the song of a single bird. We spent the night by a rocky streamlet close-hugged by dense forest walls. Heavy clouds crept over us to the rumblings of thunder. The blurred crescent of the moon struggled for freedom. Our camp-fires crackled in the ghostly gloom, and quiet human voices pervaded the forest's deadly stillness save for the melody of the trickling water.

> A savage place! as holy and enchanted
> As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
> By woman wailing for her demon lover.

Deserted Mahaella marked the limit of our westward journey. Here we struck at right angles the northern track to Yakkure, but, before taking it, deviated south to the village of Dolagalwella. For three days we had followed uncertain game trails, and seen no human beings besides those of our company. The path now began to show signs of use: there were chipped trees, polished stones on which axes had been whetted, and fire-places where monitors were roasted. Obviously we were nearing civilisation! Indeed, here it was.

Scaling a strong stockade we found ourselves in a *chena*, some twelve acres in extent, in which nestled the half dozen huts of the closely related families of a Vedda patriarchy. The maize and *kurakkan* crops had been taken, and the place was now rank with a catch-crop of vegetables and fruit: beans, brinjals, melons, cassava, plantains and papaws. Chillies luxuriated; there was not a compound but had its vermilion heap, not a hut but had a section partitioned off with frame and fire-place for drying them during the rains; chillies were the current coin with which these folk traded with the pedlar Moors.

The males of the settlement were away in quest of food, and only the women and children remained. No folk on earth, perhaps, are shier than Vedda women; in the presence of the stranger they are dumb. Some of them were relatively fair-complexioned, presumably from Kandyan admixture; all wore an abundance of bead ornaments, finger

5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

and ear-rings and necklaces. Sober, wistful children ate raw melons or fragments of *kurrukkan* cake as hard as brick, plastered over with flies.

Indian corn and *kurrukkan*, the staple food of these people, are prepared in a variety of ways. After soaking in water for twenty-four hours, they are reduced to flour, *kurrukkan* on grind-stones, maize with pestle and mortar, and eaten in one of three forms—*talapa*, *roti*, or *pittu* appetised with pungent sambols.

Let us look into one of their homes. It is windowless and dark, except for the light that comes between the bark-slats in a hundred dazzling shafts. There are two rooms; the inner small and narrow, the outer a larger living room with a single doorway protected by a two foot fence—a provision for the children. At one corner is a hearth underlying a low trestle bridging the wall angle, for drying flesh; at another a cage-work containing earthen pots and garish Allervale cups and plates. Hanging about the walls are rolled mats, oil bottles, baskets and clusters of sheathed corn cobs. Head-high is an open ceiling containing a jumble of things such as an old umbrella, wicker baskets, large earthen pots and gourds. On the floor is a large grind-stone, and littered about are shreds of mats, a deer skin or two, dirty cloths, a small pillow, a betel bag, a rush broom and a polished plank—certainly the most primitive chair imaginable. There is also a coconut-scraper of curious design, made of a serrated iron disc wedged into the outstanding limb of a triple-branched stem resting on its Y-shaped arms. Such are the appointments of a *chena* Vedda's domicile.

These communal dwellings stockaded against beast aggression in the heart of wild nature, the watch huts on the trees, the halloa all night, proclaim the incessant struggle between man and the animals in whose strong kingdom he is only a small unit. But for its inalienable hardships the life of this people makes a homely appeal to the human heart. Nature a capricious giver, bestows now abundantly now sparingly, and he who would wrest a living from her must have supple thews and great endurance.

Henanagalla was a place of antiquarian interest a few miles from Dolagalwella. On the summit of a large low rock in an undulating glade stood a broken dagaba completely obscured by a growth of big trees and scrub. Desultory worshippers had trussed up a slab for offerings of wild flowers. A low wall of hewn granite blocks surrounded the structure, and a half buried monolith or two peeped out of the ruin.

Descending from here and working round through a tangle of brush-wood, we came to a commodious cave quite forty paces long, showing the remains of enclosing and partitioning walls, a slotted stone for the support of a pillar and a large flat *puja* stone.

Besides these evidences of ancient occupation, were signs of more recent use. The cave was obviously a resort of monitor hunters. There were the long sticks with which the savoury creatures had been poked out of deep lairs, and cooking frames where they had been roasted. The floor was littered with their dry heads, corn-cobs and nut-shells.

But more interesting than all this were the crude drawings that adorned the inner dome. Here was a veritable gallery of untutored art, wrought with finger for brush and a mixture of ash and water for paint. There were the most primitive representations imaginable of leopards, elephants

8: Spittel D-8 (ca. 1920) 1965 AX8 Vedda AX8

with men astride them, bows fitted with tridentate arrows, and all manner of cabalastic signs. Many an interesting discovery awaits here the spade of the antiquary.

How different is the appeal of ruins buried in the remote forest, in the setting with which Time and Nature have invested them, from those set out in the trim nudity of archaeologic display with tourist-ridden roads leading up to them.

Leaving Dolagalwella we turned up north, and soon entered the first of a series of great parklands we were now to traverse. These fine shooting grounds were probably centuries ago flourishing fields of paddy, fed by large artificial tanks, the crumbling embankments of which often outlie the glades. This is why, perhaps, the best game country in Ceylon to-day is to be found in the precincts of old kingdoms such as those of Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Tissamaharama.

We had put up for the night on a river bed many miles from the nearest settlement, when, to our surprise, a man armed with bow and arrows walked into camp. Approaching us without the least diffidence, he tapped us familiarly on the chest and looked us up and down appraisingly, speaking an incomprehensible jargon. Kombua, he happened to be, a Vedda of Dambana, a score of miles away. He affected ignorance of Sinhalese, and maintained the farce all the time he was with us; but if we wanted evidence that he was imposter in this, we had it the next morning when our cook accidentally dropped an ember on him: "This devil wants to burn me," he said in excellent Sinhalese, taken off his guard. A picturesque fellow was old Kombua, spare, sparse-bearded and beady-eyed. From his gaping ear-holes dangled loosely doubled strings of white beads. In a small bundle knotted round his waist was his baggage, and let into his waist-string was a small axe. He was alertness itself as he guided us the following day. His deep-set eyes took in everything. The flick of a leaf would petrify him on the instant, often with foot uplifted like a startled retriever; the faintest hum and he would search aloft, for honey is food to the Vedda.

The glades teemed with nesting green-pigeons. From many a low bough we started a bird, to discover its clutch of white eggs showing through the meagre nest. I was manoeuvring to add a couple of imperial pigeons to our menu, when of a sudden there was a flutter at my elbow and a jungle hen floated away into the cover of the bordering scrub. I had but to turn my head to discover her mottled eggs in a charred stump. The twigs and creepers about the nest gave it just that air of negligence that was its sole concealment. I debated with my companion as to the freshness of our find. "Oh, they contain young ones right enough; just feel how heavy they are," he said taking an egg in his hand with an air of expertness that disguised a tender heart. I had no pretensions to such skill, but knowing that a jungle hen lays some six to a dozen eggs and seeing that here were only three, decided to rob them, and justifiably as it turned out when we enjoyed them with bacon the following morning.

Coming to a stream we heard, closer than we had ever done before, the melodious mocking of that elusive cuckoo, *cuculus micropterus*. I asked Kombua to show it to me. "He cannot be seen," was the confident assertion of a Sinhalese. The Vedda awaited a repetition of the note, then peered into the dense foliage of a tall tree and in a trice was pointing

8: Spinal D-8 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX8 Vedda AX8

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A Vedda girl of Dolagalwella (Page 33)

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Yakkure tank. (Page 39)

[Facing p. 38]

5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

13 causeway over an abysmal ravine. We had not the stomach to tempt those ways.

Below us stretched a vast forest studded with the tree-clad hills of Omuna, Henanagalla and many another; and over the red-topped *kongs* we caught the glimpse of the Mahaweli as it cleft the wilderness of trees.

113 To this retreat once came an ascetic who lived alone, lost in meditation, for months. His evening chant could be heard at Horiwila three miles away. The bears that came to drink at the pools in the caves did him no harm. In a hidden vault, so the story goes, he found a gold-lettered slab and a phial of oil. He made the wisdom of the script his own, and drank the oil; then descended the rock, and ever after went about as one obsessed.

115 Sinna's droll talk relieved the irksomeness of our descent. Indicating [301] a wild jasmine, he told us they were the flowers Vedda women strung on creeper-stems for the adornment of their hair. He was for leaving us at the foot of the hill and continuing his search for food for his waiting family. But we took him to camp, fed him abundantly on rice and venison and gave him a heavy hamper besides. It was pleasant to picture the rare joy of his home-coming.

010 At Manampitiya old Kanapan-*vidane* met us with two limes which he graciously presented to us. This charming Tamil custom is often the prelude to a villainous request. Kanapan gave us cordial welcome, eyed solicitously our unkempt figures, and chided us in a kindly, paternal way for undertaking so 'terrible' a journey. "Why wander in the wilderness when you can play about the highways in your car?" he said. His conversation, though varied kept reverting to one theme—the delinquencies of the village school-master, now away on a holiday. Kanapan had a penchant for denunciation; on a previous occasion it was the tyranny of an apothecary, now it concerned the amours of a pedagogue.

"Is that the sort of man to teach young children?" he concluded disgustedly. "A man who breaks up quiet homes. The woman does not even care for him; he bewitched her with charmed food. A respectable home wrecked by a worthless fellow!" and he spat with scorn.

Perhaps it was the full bottle of whisky standing tantalisingly on the table that induced him to confide in us that the village tavern had now been closed for over two years, during which time he had not touched a drink; he had almost forgotten the taste of liquor he said wistfully.

"Then you are a total abstainer now?" I ventured.

"What's to be done, sir, I have to be," he sighed.

"I suppose you wouldn't have a drink now if one were given you?" I asked.

"How can I refuse when a gentleman offers," said he, taking the wind out of my sails. "With your favour, sir, I will. Cha," he continued with sudden affection, "I feared you had been to the war and got killed. How glad I am to see you again, sir."

We poured him a bumper which he swallowed neat, placing the empty cup within easy reach beside him. He reverted to the school-master;

When Kauwa was young his people wore threshed *riti** bark suspended from the waist by a *riti* strip. A Vedda belle would sometimes trick herself out in such adornments as a *riti* collar sewn at the back with *naga*† fibre, anklets of red ixora blooms, lotus petals in ear lobes and as garlands round neck and loins, and circlets of strung wild jasmine round the hair knot. Difficult, though it be, to reconcile this picture with the wretched specimens one meets to-day, it must be admitted that Kauwa had no imagination to run loose. An old song tells of Vedda maidens whose heads were adorned with peacock plumes.

Vedda man and wife usually walk the forest together, and accouchements often occur away from home and female assistance; the man then does duty for midwife by placing the woman with her back to a rock and two stones to her feet. For nine days after child-birth he feeds her only on *gesuala* yams and the flesh of monitors.

*Antiaris toxicaria.
†Ficus altissima

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[facing p.65]

interfusion of Vedda blood—the epathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta, six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya; thence seven to Beligalla which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled: and *chenas* are frequently met with; changing from year to year, these often absurb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously. 131

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow [101 361]
stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved, and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was [157]
the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne.

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found [321]
the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep [626 152]
the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women.

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each [576 411]
hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine.

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for 342
Vedda habitations; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukkan* [241]
and maize here; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community.

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the 101
same as those of Bulugahadena; and so were the others we met scattered 361
about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life; but they were obviously there for our benefit!

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never 161
before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by 177
their nearness to Badulla and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting.

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, 224
better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from